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CONDENSED HISTORY OF THE USDA

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( T. Swann Harding  
(Office of Informa-  
( tion, USDA  
(Washington, D. C.

It is quite proper to say that the Department of Agriculture grew from mere seed. The seeds were those of plants of economic value to American farmers. Both plants and seed were distributed to facilitate the propagation in this new and rapidly expanding country of crops brought from afar and adapted thereto. Hence plant exploration and importation were the earliest form of agricultural activity in which our Government engaged, the gathering and dissemination of agricultural statistics being second.

In early days there was scant need for a Department of Agriculture, and we had none. We had a vast wilderness of land, rivers, and forests to open to settlement and cultivation. When land wore out in one place it was always possible to move on to even richer and more productive land somewhere else. Agriculture was a way of living, not a way of making a living. Methods of transportation, food processing and preservation, and commercial marketing were all largely in the future. Farmers aimed to be self-subsistent. They depended upon others than themselves for very little.

But even in those days, in fact even in Colonial times, far-sighted individuals, later to be known as Founding Fathers, - Franklin and Jefferson among them, interested themselves when abroad in sending back to this young country seeds, cuttings, and specimens of plants and trees which they thought might turn out to be valuable here agriculturally. As our young Nation got under way and established a Department of State it became natural for consular officers to aid in this work. The Navy was also called upon to bring back plants and seeds. Gradually the habit arose of depositing these in the Patent Office, which was the nearest thing to a scientific agency in the young Government, and which formed part of the Department of State until 1849.

This brings us rather abruptly to Blodgett's Hotel. It once stood in downtown Washington at 7th and F Sts., N.W. It resulted from a movement started in 1795 to give Washington a decent hotel. Both its site and its architecture were the result of lotteries. The site was once part of the farm of John Orr which, before that time, extended from 7th and F, N.W. as far out as the Public Library at 7th and K. The fishing was excellent at 14th and K in those days, and for some years thereafter.

When completed, Blodgett's Hotel occupied only part of its 204-by-300-foot lot. It did not even fill the entire E street side of the square. Within it was a theatre in which the first Washington theatrical performance was staged. At this time the entire Federal Government was crowded into a single 25-room building. You probably know what happened next without being told. The crowding became intolerable by 1810 and in that year Blodgett's Hotel was purchased to relieve the congestion. Thereupon the Post Office Department, the City Post Office, and the Patent Office, were moved into it.

Dr. Thornton was then Commissioner of Patents. As late as 1822 he received only \$1,500 a year, his clerk \$1,000, his messenger \$250, and that was his entire staff. Patents were merely registered without required proof of priority, but the President himself and members of his Cabinet did not pass upon them as had been the case in earlier days. Blodgett's Hotel narrowly escaped destruction by fire in 1814, when Washington was invaded, but Dr. Thornton's eloquence prevailed upon Col. Jones, leader of a British conflagration squad, to spare it because of the cultural value of the Patent Office's collection on the top floor.



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Conditions in Washington about this time may be surmised from the following item in a local paper dated April 21, 1836: "The ill-fated man who was thrown down by a hog opposite the General Post Office on Thursday, as mentioned in our last, died on Saturday from the severe injury he sustained, his skull being fractured by that infamous incident." Obviously the Department of Agriculture was even then trying to make its way into the Government on four legs and disguised as a pig!

Indeed Commissioner Ellsworth took unusual interest in agricultural patents and statistics, and in the collection and dissemination of plants and seeds of economic value. For a considerable time he carried on without specific authorization by the Congress, simply because so many farm people desired the services he offered. This apparently aroused some Congressional suspicion for Chairman Fletcher of the Committee on Patents wrote Ellsworth in late 1838 asking what he was up to anyway. His reply, dated January 22, 1839, was so well made that the Congress gave him permission to spend \$1,000 of the incoming funds of the Patent Office, which has always been self-supporting, on agricultural matters. This sum was apparently expected to last some years, and it did!

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In his annual report for 1861, Caleb B. Smith, Secretary of the Interior, rather perfunctorily suggested that a Bureau of Agriculture and Statistics be founded. Lincoln repeated this suggestion almost verbatim in his message to Congress of December 2, 1861. He sandwiched the recommendation in almost off-handedly and very casually. But Congress took action and, after some rather diffident debate as to whether a Cabinet officer should head the new Department, it voted an agency with an anomalous bureau status supervised by a Commissioner, and the act founding the Department was signed May 15, 1862.

The Homestead Act, which made provision for the apportionment of freehold farms of 160 acres each from the public domain, to all citizens who would make homes on them and till them for 5 years, followed 5 days later. On July 2, 1862, the Land-Grant College Act became law, endowing the agricultural colleges with 11,000,000 acres - about the area of Vermont - which the States were authorized to sell, using the proceeds to set up the schools.

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It cannot be said that the Department's founding resulted from any deep conviction on Lincoln's part nor did anyone at that time think out or formulate any well-planned program for the Department to follow. Lincoln did not think of himself as a farmer and had little agrarian interest. The Department's beginning was almost casual. Since the Patent Office by now had an agricultural division, it was natural that the head of this should become the first Commissioner of Agriculture, and so he did. The Department was organized in two basement rooms of the Patent Office Building.

The first Commissioner was Isaac Newton, a Pennsylvanian of Quaker stock. He had been manager of two model farms not very far from Philadelphia and had won himself quite a reputation. He was also a local politician of some note. He operated a confectionery and creamery in Philadelphia from which, among other things, he long shipped butter to the White House. Just before the Civil War he purchased a farm in Virginia, but his wife refused to move there, so he tried to manage it by remote control through a brother. The Civil War bankrupted the enterprise and, since Newton was out of a job, his friends suggested that he try to get on the Government payroll.

Newton did just that. He moved to Washington, met the right people, and soon became both a friend of Lincoln and head of the agricultural work in the Patent Office. Naturally Lincoln made him head of the new Department of Agriculture. During part of the Civil War Newton was in residence at the White House to supervise the food eaten by the President and guard it against poisoning. While there he appears to have become a friend and confidant of Mrs. Lincoln who not only shared her lavish troubles with him but sought his aid in paying store bills she imprudently ran up. These he did either by settling them out of his own pocket and letting her pay him back in installments, or by interceding with Lincoln.

It is difficult to assay Newton at this late date. He had loyal friends and venomous enemies. Some extolled his learning and his wisdom; others insisted he was all but illiterate and so incompetent that he could not satisfactorily perform his duties. Farm journals in general paid little attention to the Department and newspapers practically none, but Newton was often attacked in print. He actually was to have been dismissed by President Johnson for incompetence, but was saved by an unhappy accident.

As he sat in his office one warm summer day in 1866 he heard an approaching thunderstorm. He remembered certain wheat samples that had been cut but not stored on the Department's experiment grounds over on the site of the Department's present buildings. He clapped on his hat and rushed over two miles to supervise the saving of these samples. He stood in the sun; doubtless in a frock coat, and oversaw the job. The Washington July sun did the rest. For Newton suffered sunstroke and, though he lingered almost a year, he was never much good after that.

Newton's primary aim was to make two blades of grass grow where one grew before. He appointed a botanist, entomologist, a chemist, and a statistician. He sought to carry out the aims of the organic act founding the Department, and that law was as broad in scope as all outdoors.

He sought to collect, arrange, and publish valuable agricultural information; to collect and introduce valuable seeds, plants, and animals; to promote chemistry, botany, and entomology; and to establish a Library and a Museum.

Newton wrote his reports in a flowing, somewhat pedantic style with a wealth of classical allusions. The propagating garden was established at 6th Street and Missouri Avenue, S.W., and the 40-acre tract between 12th and 14th Streets, S.W., B St., and the Canal, called Reservation No. 2, was finally wrested from the Army, which long kept cattle on it, and turned to use as an experiment farm.

Lincoln was dead. The Department of Agriculture was founded and by 1868 had a building of its own, the old Red Brick Building you will hear oldsters talk about. It cost \$140,420 including furniture and equipment. The Department had less than 50 employees in January 1868.

The work continued, tending to attract the attention of few but the gentleman farmers. Most of Newton's successors were ill-qualified to lend the Department prestige and to extend its field of usefulness. The Department also had very limited funds. Then Norman J. Colman became Commissioner of Agriculture in April 1885.

By that time there was widespread agitation both for the founding and support of agricultural experiment stations in the different States by Federal aid and for raising the head of the Department of Agriculture to Cabinet rank. Colman actively supported both movements. In 1887 the experiment station law was passed and in 1889 Colman became the first Secretary of Agriculture from February 13 to March 6, when Jeremiah M. Rusk was appointed.

At this point the Department began really to gain status and significance. It also began to grow much more rapidly both in size and in service. Because of increasing complexities of the agricultural enterprise farmers found it more and more necessary to have in Washington a strong and reliable Department to serve them.

In 1884 the Bureau of Animal Industry was established in response to a special Act of Congress authorizing its establishment to aid in the eradication of animal diseases. In 1888 the Office of Experiment Stations came into existence to undertake the work assigned to the Department in connection with the Hatch or Experiment Station Act. In 1890 the Weather Bureau was transferred to the Department from the War Department.

In March 1897 James Wilson became Secretary of Agriculture. He served until March 1913. His administration was outstanding for the development of research and increase in the number of scientists employed by the Department. He indeed enabled the Department to carry out Newton's dictum about two blades of grass growing where one grew before.

In 1901 Wilson formed the Bureaus of Soils, Plant Industry, Forestry, and Chemistry, and in 1904 the Bureau of Entomology. The Office of Public Roads was created in 1905; and became the Bureau of Public Roads in 1918. In 1906 came the Bureau of Biological Survey, which arose out of work in economic ornithology and mammalogy which began in the Division of Entomology.

Work in many other lines was undertaken, among them agricultural engineering, dairying, irrigation, drainage, and also marketing, extension work, and agricultural economics and statistics. By 1910 the problem of distributing enhanced agricultural production was already attaining importance.



The growth of the Department during Secretary Wilson's administration was remarkable. Whereas there were only about two thousand employees in 1897, of whom over 400 were women, the Department had 2,514 employees in Washington and 10,190 in the field by the end of Secretary Wilson's term. A regiment of these new hired hands consisted of scientists working in all fields to aid agriculture.

In a sense it may be said these scientists succeeded too well. They enabled farmers to produce so efficiently that market and credit conditions became increasingly unbalanced. New varieties of plants and animals, new methods of protecting them from insects and disease, new techniques of cultivation and soil enrichment flowed from the Department's laboratories.

Various regulatory laws began to be passed and turned over to the Department for enforcement, the meat inspection and food and drugs acts being examples. When the national forests were turned over to it, the Department also undertook custodial functions of wide scope. Step by step the will of the people as transmitted through the Congress of the United States made the Department evolve into a large and influential institution.

The term of David F. Houston who followed Wilson was chiefly remarkable for overt entrance of the social sciences into the Department. It is quite true that various studies in the fields of agricultural marketing, credit, and economics generally had been undertaken before Houston's term, but he recognized their importance and so reorganized the Department that they could function effectively. The Bureau of Agricultural Economics came into existence. So did the Agricultural Extension Service, as an organized institution and the Office of Markets and Rural Organization. The Federal Aid Road Act and the Farm Loan Act were passed.

Houston's reports merit careful study. Houston was a sort of one-man New Deal in agriculture all by himself. Many of the ideas he expressed were implemented later, but he had the vision to see them years ahead. Had not the first world war intervened to deflect him from the more orderly processes of peace it seems apparent he would have acted to prevent the growth of disruptive forces which required drastic treatment something like two decades later.

This was a dynamic period in the history of the Department. It carried over into the terms of Houston's immediate successors - Meredith, Henry C. Wallace, father of the Vice President, and Howard M. Gore. The terms of William M. Jardine and Arthur M. Hyde, which lasted from March 5, 1925 until Henry A. Wallace became Secretary on March 4, 1933, may be regarded as a period of consolidation and Departmental unification.

During the Jardine and Hyde period the Department was welded into a unit by various organizational changes. At the same time the desperate post-war situation of the American farmer was seen clearly, analyzed wisely, and prescribed for in terms that were not to be carried out until after 1933. Study of the annual reports of Jardine and Hyde is useful to enlighten the reader about the many sound diagnoses made and treatments suggested for the pathological farmer depression, which began soon after our unhealthful agricultural expansion during the first world war, and culminated in an ugly and disheartening climax around 1930-32.



The administration of Henry A. Wallace brings us to modern times. It was characterized primarily by creation of the "action" agencies. Originally information in the field of agriculture was collected and kept on tap for the asking. Those who did not ask got little of it. The upper class of more intelligent farmers profited by it. The next step was taken in the administration of Secretary Rusk who appreciated the urgent necessity for publishing the information in popular, usable form, and who first issued press releases and farmers' bulletins.

This gave farmers knowledge about how to produce larger crops with less labor and more certainty. That in turn induced more of them to go further into commercial agriculture than ever before and thus to become dependent upon transportation, labor, market, credit, land-value, and equipment factors not wholly within their control. Difficulties arose and the next step was to institute demonstration farms and to take knowledge about agricultural matters to the farmer's home using the Extension Service.

At the same time marketing and credit studies led to legislative acts which improved farmer markets and gave farmers better credit facilities. The first world war crammed a generation of progress into a few years, resulted in opening land to cultivation which should never have gone out of grass or pasture, produced a tremendous inflation in farm prices and land values, and led to an inevitable deflation which bankrupted farmers and left them producing food and fiber for the rest of us at a discount. The action agencies tried to make it financially possible for farmers to take advantage of the most up-to-date agricultural knowledge in order to rehabilitate themselves.

A brave effort was made on many fronts to right farmer wrongs after 1933, -- insofar as Government agencies in Washington could do the job within the frame of reference set up by public opinion and legislative enactment. No such procedure can be direct or dictatorial in this country, for we proceed by democratic processes. The end result of what the Government does is always the resultant of many conflicting forces. The conflicts must be resolved as best possible and we must then proceed to do what we can. We cannot evolve a perfect system in Washington and then inflict it on the country; in any case no such system would be perfect.

Before we could solve our farm problem or give farmers parity prices, i.e. prices enabling them to get as much manufactured goods for their farm commodities as they did in stated pre-first-world-war years, a second world war descended on us. Claude R. Wickard became Secretary September 5, 1940. The National Defense Program was under way. He quickly saw its significance and immediately began to preach greater hog production and more marketing of beef in 1941.

Early in that year, as you doubtless know, the British suddenly called upon us for sufficient concentrated protein foods to supply one-fourth of their population. If they did not get this food they faced malnutrition, lowered morale, and disaster. The Lend-Lease Act was passed. The Food For Freedom program promptly got under way. Our farm plant underwent inventory and production goals were set up, marks at which farmers were asked to shoot in order to produce what our potential allies needed.

War followed in December 1941, the goals were reassayed and reannounced, with marked emphasis on oil crops and other wartime needs, in January 1942. Those goals were achieved in a year of record production for all time. Other goals set up in 1942 have been achieved this year. There is no need to dwell on these matters as they are all of recent occurrence.

In closing, a word is in order about Departmental reorganization in recent years. During the period immediately following 1933 many new agencies were created. Some, like the Agricultural Adjustment Agency, were immediately part of the Department. Others, like Commodity Credit Corporation, Farm Credit Administration, Farm Security Administration, Rural Electrification Administration, and Soil Conservation Service, began life elsewhere and came into the Department later. Also between 1936 and 1940 certain agencies which had long been part of the Department were transferred elsewhere - the Bureau of Public Roads, Food and Drug Administration, Biological Survey, and Weather Bureau.

On December 13, 1941, there was announced a major reorganization of the Department to speed the war effort. It was validated by Executive Order February 23, 1942. At that time the Agricultural Research Administration, the Agricultural Conservation and Adjustment Administration, and the Agricultural Marketing Administration were created.

Another fundamental reorganization took place December 10, 1942, following the Executive Order of December 5 which delegated responsibility for the Nation's wartime food program to the Secretary of Agriculture. At this time the Food Production Administration and Food Distribution Administration were created, the remaining line agencies being Agricultural Research Administration, Rural Electrification Administration, Commodity Credit Corporation, and Forest Service.

Then, by Executive Order of March 26, 1943, the War Food Administration was established under a War Food Administrator, appointed by and directly responsible to the President. This order had the effect, as amended April 19, of dividing the Department line or program agencies into two groups, one responsible to the War Food Administrator, and the other under the Secretary's supervision.

Forming the War Food Administration are the following agencies: Office of Labor, Office of Materials and Supplies, Office of Transportation, Office of War Board Services, Food Distribution Administration, Food Production Administration, Commodity Credit Corporation, and Extension Service. The Food Production Administration consists of the Agricultural Adjustment Agency, Soil Conservation Service, Farm Security Administration, and Federal Crop Insurance Corporation, the last now being in liquidation.

The following agencies are responsible to the Secretary of Agriculture - Agricultural Research Administration, Forest Service, Rural Electrification Administration, and Farm Credit Administration. The Agricultural Research Administration consists of Bureau of Agricultural and Industrial Chemistry and four Regional Laboratories, Bureau of Animal Industry, Bureau of Dairy Industry, Bureau of Entomology and Plant Quarantine, Bureau of Human Nutrition and Home Economics, Bureau of Plant Industry, Soils and Agricultural Engineering, Office of Experiment Stations, and the Bankhead-Jones Laboratories, with the Beltsville Research Center under it administratively.

The other staff agencies are utilized by the War Food Administration in the same manner and to the same extent as they have hitherto been used by the USDA. They are: Bureau of Agricultural Economics, Office of Budget and Finance, Office of Foreign Agricultural Relations, Office of Information, Library, Office of Personnel, Office of the Solicitor, Office of Land Use Coordination, and the Office of Plant and Operation. Office of Land Use Coordination is a staff agency of the Secretary's Office.

That is where we are today. But tomorrow is another day.

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U. S. Department of Agriculture

By

T. Swann Harding, Office of Information  
December 1, 1943

Had you come into the Department on the day it was founded you would have needed very little orientation. You could have become acquainted with everybody very easily. By the time you had shaken hands with the new Commissioner and his two or three assistants you would have met all the Government employees who worked in the field of agriculture. Today you would tire yourself out trying to shake hands with our 80,000 employees, even if you didn't also have to run all over the United States to do it. But great oaks from little acorns grow, and it is quite proper to say that the present Department of Agriculture grew from mere seed.

The seed were those of plants of economic value to American farmers. Both plants and seed were distributed to facilitate the propagation in this new and rapidly expanding country of crops brought from afar but that could be adapted here. Plant exploration and importation were the earliest form of agricultural activity in which our Government engaged, the gathering and dissemination of agricultural statistics being second.

In early days there was scant need for a Department of Agriculture, and we had none. We had a vast wilderness of land, rivers, and forests to open to settlement and cultivation. When land wore out in one place it was always possible to move on to even richer and more productive land somewhere else. Agriculture was a way of living, not a way of making a living. Methods of transportation, food processing and preservation, and commercial marketing were all largely in the future. Farmers aimed to be self-subsistent. They depended upon others than themselves for very little.

But even in those days, in fact even in Colonial times, farsighted individuals, later to be known as Founding Fathers, - Franklin and Jefferson among them, interested themselves when abroad in sending back to this young country seeds, cuttings, and specimens of plants and trees which they thought might turn out to be valuable here agriculturally. George Washington also as early as 1794 was a member of the British Agricultural Board and he long corresponded with Sir John Sinclair its founder.

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In his annual report for 1861, Caleb B. Smith, Secretary of the Interior, rather perfunctorily suggested that a Bureau of Agriculture and Statistics be founded. Lincoln repeated this suggestion almost verbatim in his message to Congress of December 2, 1861. He sandwiched the recommendation in offhandedly and casually. But Congress took action and, after some rather diffident debate as to whether a Cabinet officer should head the new Department, it voted an agency with an anomalous bureau status supervised by a Commissioner, and the act founding the Department was signed May 15, 1862.

The Homestead Act, which made provision for the apportionment of freehold farms of 160 acres each from the public domain, to all citizens who would make homes on them and till them for 5 years, followed 5 days later. On July 2, 1862, the Land-Grant College Act became law, endowing the agricultural colleges with 11,000,000 acres - about the area of Vermont - which the States were authorized to sell, using the proceeds to set up the schools.

It cannot be said that the Department's founding resulted from any deep conviction on Lincoln's part nor did anyone at that time think out or formulate any well-planned program for the Department to follow. Lincoln did not think of himself as a farmer and had little agrarian interest. The Department's beginning was almost casual. Since the Patent Office by now had an agricultural division, it was natural that the head of this should become the first Commissioner of Agriculture, and so he did. The Department was organized in two basement rooms of the Patent Office Building.

The first Commissioner was Isaac Newton, a Pennsylvanian of Quaker stock. He had been manager of two model farms not very far from Philadelphia and had won himself quite a reputation. He was also a local politician of some note. He operated a confectionery and creamery in Philadelphia from which, among other things, he shipped butter to the White House. Just before the Civil War he purchased a farm in Virginia, but his wife refused to move there, so he tried to manage it by remote control through a brother. The Civil War bankrupted the enterprise and, since Newton was out of a job, his friends suggested that he try to get on the Government payroll.

Newton did just that. He moved to Washington, met the right people, and soon became both a friend of Lincoln and head of the agricultural work in the Patent Office. Naturally Lincoln made him head of the new Department of Agriculture. During part of the Civil War Newton was in residence at the White House to supervise the food eaten by the President and guard it against poisoning. While there he became a friend and confidant of Mrs.



Lincoln who not only shared with him her lavish and frequent troubles but sought his aid in paying department store bills she imprudently ran up. This he did either by settling them out of his own pocket and letting her pay him back in installments, if they were not too large, or by interceding for her with Lincoln, which required considerable tact and diplomacy.

It is difficult to assay Newton at this late date. He had loyal friends and venomous enemies. Some extolled his learning and his wisdom; others insisted he was all but illiterate and so incompetent that he could not satisfactorily perform his duties. Farm journals in general paid little attention to the Department and newspapers practically none, but Newton was often attacked in print and speech. He actually was to have been dismissed by President Johnson for incompetence, but was saved by an unhappy accident.

As he sat in his office one warm summer day in 1866 he heard an approaching thunderstorm. He remembered certain wheat samples that had been cut but not stored on the Department's experiment grounds over on the site of the Department's present buildings. He clapped on his silk hat and rushed over two miles to supervise the saving of these samples. He stood there, doubtless in a frock coat, and oversaw the job. The Washington July sun did the rest. For Newton suffered sunstroke and, though he lingered almost a year, he was never much good after that.

Newton's primary aim was to make two blades of grass grow where one grew before. He appointed a botanist, an entomologist, a chemist, and a statistician. He sought to carry out the aims of the organic act founding the Department, and that law was as broad in scope as all outdoors.

He sought to collect, arrange, and publish valuable agricultural information; to collect and introduce valuable seeds, plants, and animals; to promote chemistry, botany, and entomology; and to establish a Library and a Museum.

Newton wrote his reports in a flowing somewhat pedantic style with a wealth of classical allusions. The propagating garden was established and the 40-acre tract between 12th and 14th Streets, S.W., B. St., and the Canal, called Reservation No. 2, was finally wrested from the Army, which long kept cattle on it, and turned to use as an experiment farm.

By 1868 the Department of Agriculture had a building of its own, the old Red Brick Building you will hear oldsters talk about. It cost 140,420, including furniture and equipment. The Department had less than 50 employees in January 1868.

The work continued, tending to attract the attention of few but the gentleman farmers. Most of Newton's successors were ill-qualified to lend the Department prestige and to extend its field of usefulness. The Department also had very limited funds. Then Norman J. Colman became Commissioner of Agriculture in April 1885.

By that time there was widespread agitation both for the founding and support of agricultural experiment stations in the different States by Federal aid and for raising the head of the Department of Agriculture to Cabinet rank. Colman actively supported both movements. In 1887 the experiment station law

was passed and in 1889 Colman became the first Secretary of Agriculture from February 13 to March 6, when Jeremiah M. Rusk was appointed by the incoming President Harrison.

At this point the Department began really to gain status and significance. It also began to grow much more rapidly both in size and in service. Because of increasing complexities of the agricultural enterprise, farmers found it more and more necessary to have in Washington a strong, reliable Department to serve them.

In 1884 the Bureau of Animal Industry was founded in response to a special Act of Congress authorizing its establishment to aid in the eradication of animal diseases. In 1888 the Office of Experiment Stations came into existence to undertake the work assigned to the Department in connection with the Hatch or Experiment Station Act. In 1890 the Weather Bureau was transferred to the Department from the War Department when it had existed in the Army Signal Corps since its creation in 1870.

In March 1897 James Wilson became Secretary of Agriculture. He served until March 1913. His administration was outstanding for the development of research and increase in the number of scientists employed by the Department. He indeed enabled the Department to carry out Newton's dictum about two blades of grass growing where one grew before.

In 1901 Wilson formed the Bureaus of Soils, Plant Industry, Forestry, and Chemistry, and in 1904 the Bureau of Entomology. The Office of Public Roads was created in 1905. In 1906 came the Bureau of Biological Survey, which arose out of work in economic ornithology and mammalogy which began in the Division of Entomology.

Work in many other line was undertaken, among them agricultural engineering, dairying, irrigation, drainage, marketing, extension work, and agricultural economics and statistics. By 1910 the problem of distributing enhanced agricultural production was already attaining importance.

The growth of the Department during Secretary Wilson's administration, was remarkable. Whereas there were only about two thousand employees in 1897, of whom over 400 were women, the Department had 2,514 employees in Washington alone and 10,190 in the field by the end of Secretary Wilson's term. A regiment of these new hired hands consisted of scientists working in all fields to aid agriculture.

In a sense it may be said these scientists succeeded too well. They enabled farmers to produce so efficiently that market and credit conditions became increasingly unbalanced. New varieties of plants and animals, new methods of protecting them from insects and disease, new techniques of cultivation and soil enrichment flowed from the Department's laboratories.

Various regulatory laws began to be passed and turned over to the Department for enforcement, the meat inspection, the animal quarantine, and the food and drugs acts being examples. When the national forests were turned over to it in 1905, the Department also undertook custodial functions of wide scope. Step by step the will of the people as transmitted through the Congress



of the United States made the Department evolve into a large and influential institution.

The term of David F. Houston who followed Wilson was chiefly remarkable for overt entrance of the social sciences into the Department. It is quite true that various studies in the fields of agricultural marketing, credit, and economics generally had been undertaken before Houston's term, but he recognized their importance and so reorganized the Department that they could function effectively. The Bureau of Agricultural Economics came into existence. So did the Agricultural Extension Service, as an organized institution, and the Office of Markets and Rural Organization. The Federal Highway, the Farm Loan, the Grain Standards, Cotton Futures, Warehouse, Migratory Bird Treaty, Packers and Stockyards, and Commodity Exchange Acts were passed.

Houston's reports merit careful study. Houston was a sort of one-man New Deal in agriculture all by himself. Many of the ideas he proposed years ahead were implemented later. Had not the first world war intervened to deflect him from the more orderly processes of peace it seems apparent he would have acted to prevent the growth of disruptive forces which required drastic treatment something like two decades later.

This was a dynamic period in the history of the Department. It carried over into the terms of Houston's immediate successors - Meredith, Henry C. Wallace father of the Vice President, and Howard M. Gore. The terms of William M. Jardine and Arthur M. Hyde, which lasted from March 5, 1925 until Henry A. Wallace became Secretary on March 4, 1933, may be regarded as a period of consolidation and Departmental unification.

During the Jardine and Hyde period the Department was welded into a unit by various organizational changes. At the same time the desperate post-war situation of the American farmer was seen clearly, analyzed wisely, and prescribed for in terms that were not to be carried out until after 1933. Study of the annual reports of Jardine and Hyde will enlighten the reader about the many sound diagnoses made and treatments suggested for the pathological farmer depression, which began soon after our unhealthful agricultural expansion during the first world war, and culminated in an ugly and disheartening climax around 1930-32. They clearly stated what should be done but were unable to do it until public opinion was reformulated and crystallized.

The administration of Henry A. Wallace brings us to modern times. It was characterized primarily by creation of the "action" agencies. Originally information in the field of agriculture was collected and kept on tap for the asking. Those who did not ask got little of it. The upper class of more intelligent farmers profited by it. The next step was taken in the administration of Secretary Rusk who appreciated the urgent necessity for publishing the information in popular, usable form, and who first issued press releases and farmers' bulletins.

This gave farmers knowledge about how to produce larger crops with less labor and more certainty. That, in turn, induced more of them to go further into commercial agriculture than ever before and thus to become dependent upon transportation, labor, market, credit, land-value, and equipment factors not wholly within their control. Difficulties arose and the next step was to institute demonstration farms and to take knowledge about agricultural matters to the farmer's home using the Extension Service.

At the same time marketing and credit studies led to legislative acts which improved farm markets and credit facilities. The first world war crammed a generation of progress into a few years, resulted in opening land to cultivation which should never have gone out of grass or pasture, produced a tremendous inflation in farm prices and land values, and led to an inevitable deflation which bankrupted farmers and left them producing food and fiber for the rest of us at a discount. The action agencies tried to make it financially possible for farmers to take advantage of the most up-to-date agricultural knowledge in order to rehabilitate themselves while producing abundance for effective consumer demand.

A brave effort was made on many fronts to right farmer wrongs after 1933, -- insofar as Government agencies in Washington could do the job within the frame of reference set up by public opinion and legislative enactment. No such procedure can be dictatorial in this country, for we proceed by democratic processes. What our Government actually does in any given case is always the resultant of many conflicting forces. The conflicts must be resolved as best possible and we then proceed to do what we can. We cannot evolve a perfect system in Washington and inflict it on the country, nor would any such system be perfect anyway.

Before we could solve our farm problem or give farmers parity prices, i.e. prices enabling them to get as much manufactured goods for their farm commodities as they did in stated pre-first-world-war years, a second world war descended on us. Claude R. Wickard became Secretary September 5, 1940. The National Defense Program got under way. The Secretary quickly saw its significance in raising consumer income and immediately began to preach greater hog production and more marketing of beef in 1941.

Early in that year, as you doubtless know, the British suddenly called upon us for sufficient concentrated protein foods to supply one-fourth of their population. If they did not get this food they faced malnutrition, lowered morale, and disaster. The Lend-Lease Act was passed. The Food For Freedom program promptly got under way. Our farm plant underwent inventory and production goals were set up, marks at which farmers were asked to shoot in order to produce what we ourselves and our potential allies needed.

War followed in December 1941, the goals were reassayed and reannounced, with marked emphasis on oil crops and other wartime needs, in January 1942. Those goals were achieved in a year of record production for all time. Other goals set up in 1942 were achieved in 1943. There is no need to dwell on these matters as they are all of recent occurrence.

Finally, we should consider Departmental reorganization in recent years. During the period immediately following 1933 many new agencies were created. Some, like the Agricultural Adjustment Agency were immediately part of the Department. Others, like Commodity Credit Corporation, Farm Credit Administration, Farm Security Administration, Rural Electrification Administration, and Soil Conservation Service began life elsewhere and came into the Department later. Also between 1938 and 1940 four agencies which had long been part of the Department were transferred elsewhere: the Bureau of Public Roads, the Food and Drug Administration, the Bureau of Biological Survey, and the Weather Bureau.



On December 13, 1941, there was announced a major reorganization of the Department to streamline it for the war effort. This reorganization was validated by Executive Order February 23, 1942.

It was at that time that the scientific bureaus were consolidated into the Agricultural Research Administration. The Agricultural Adjustment Agency, the Soil Conservation Service, the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation, and the Sugar Division went into the Agricultural Conservation and Adjustment Administration, while the activities of the Surplus Marketing Administration, the Commodity Exchange Administration, most of the Agricultural Marketing Service, and the Consumers' Counsel Division of the Agricultural Adjustment Agency were combined in the Agricultural Marketing Administration.

The Commodity Credit Corporation, the Farm Security Administration, the Forest Service, the Farm Credit Administration, the Rural Electrification Administration, and the Staff Agencies remained unaffected by this reorganization. In June 1942, the Foods Requirements Committee, since abolished, and the Combined Food Board were set up, the latter with the Secretary of Agriculture as United States representative.

The Executive Order of December 5, 1942, which delegated to the Secretary of Agriculture full responsibility for our entire national wartime food program, made necessary a further departmental reorganization. So, on December 10, the Food Production Administration and the Food Distribution Administration were established. The status of the Agricultural Research Administration, the Commodity Credit Corporation, the Forest Service, and the Rural Electrification Administration remained unchanged. Again the staff agencies were not involved.

At this time there was also a transfer of personnel to the Department from both the War Production Board and the Office of Civilian Supply. This transfer rounded out the two new big Administrations.

The following departmental agencies were consolidated into the Food Production Administration: The Agricultural Conservation and Adjustment Administration (except the Sugar Agency), the Farm Credit Administration, the Farm Security Administration, that part of the Bureau of Agricultural Economics concerned primarily with planning current production, that part of the Office for Agricultural War Relations concerned primarily with food production, and the Office of Land Use Coordination.

Consolidated into the Food Distribution Administration were: The Agricultural Marketing Administration, the Sugar Agency, certain of the regulatory activities of the Bureau of Animal Industry, and that part of the Office for Agricultural War Relations concerned primarily with food distribution. This essentially marked the end of the last-named Office which had been created in response to a letter from the President dated May 5, 1941, and was originally named the Office for Agricultural Defense Relations.

In the December 10 reorganization the existing Agricultural War Board was renamed the Departmental War Board and its eight members were then: Director of Food Production, Director of Food Distribution, Agricultural Research Administrator, President of the Commodity Credit Corporation, Director of the Extension Service, Chief of the Forest Service, the Rural Electrification Administrator, and the Chief of the Bureau of Agricultural Economics.

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The original Food Advisory Committee was named by the Secretary on December 19, 1942, again under authority of the President's Executive Order of December 5. The Secretary was chairman of this committee and the other members, aside from the President of the Commodity Credit Corporation and the Agricultural Research Administrator, who were appointed later, were representatives of the War Department, the Navy Department the Board of Economic Warfare, the War Production Board, the Department of the Interior, and the Lend-Lease Administrator, the Food Production Director, and the Food Distribution Director. It was at this time that the Foods Requirements Committee was abolished.

On January 22, 1943, there was announced the appointment of a Committee on Foreign Purchase and Importation composed of the Director of Food Production, the Director of Food Distribution, the Administrator of Agricultural Research, the President of the Commodity Credit Corporation, and the Director of the Office of Foreign Agricultural Relations, with the President of the Commodity Credit Corporation as chairman.

There was established at the same time a Committee on Domestic Transportation of which the Director or Acting Director of Food Production was appointed chairman. Other members were the Director of Food Distribution, the President of the Commodity Credit Corporation, the Chief of the Forest Service, and such other agency heads as the Secretary might later designate.

On February 7, 1943, cooperative arrangements were announced whereby the basic food research required by the Army Quartermaster Corps and the Navy Bureau of Supplies and Accounts would be conducted by the Agricultural Research Administration. Two consulting committees were appointed at this time to advise and collaborate. One of these was composed of outstanding nutrition experts and the other of research personnel representing the food-processing industry.

An inter-Agency Food Procurement Committee, composed of representatives of the principal Government agencies buying food for war purposes, was created on February 9, 1943. The Director of Food Distribution was chairman and other members represented the Quartermaster General of the War Department, the Bureau of Supplies and Accounts of the Navy Department, the Marine Corps, the Veteran's Administration, the War Production Board, the Board of Economic Warfare, the Office of Price Administration, and the Commodity Credit Corporation.

The Nutrition Division of the Office of Defense Health and Welfare Service was transferred to the Food Distribution Administration by Executive Order, effective March 24, 1943.

So far, it will be seen that the tie-in between the new and the old line agencies was largely through committees and by direct contact through the Secretary. The Agricultural Research Administrator was also designated Associate Director of Food Production, with authority in the field of soil conservation. The next step thereafter was the establishment of the War Food Administration pursuant to the Executive Order of March 26 which was slightly modified, clarified, and amended by an additional order issued April 19.

At this time the President consolidated into one unit the Food Production Administration (except the Farm Credit Administration, which again became a line agency of the Department,) the Food Distribution Administration, the Commodity Credit Corporation, and the Extension Service of the Department of Agriculture into what was first called a Food Production and Distribution Administration, but was renamed the War Food Administration after April 19. In this combination the legal status of the Extension Service and its cooperative work with the States, remained unaffected.



What we have here is essentially a wartime emergency measure by which the line agencies of the Department of Agriculture have been grouped into two administrative units, each headed by an official appointed by and directly responsible to the President. One is the Secretary of Agriculture and the other the War Food Administrator. The former remains in charge of the Agricultural Research Administration, the Farm Credit Administration, the Rural Electrification Administration, and the Forest Service. The latter heads the War Food Administration.

Legally, the duties and functions of the Secretary of Agriculture and the War Food Administrator are so defined that each has authority to exercise any and all powers vested in the other by statute and otherwise. The Department's staff agencies serve both the Administration and the Department as called upon, the same identical agencies servicing both. These units are:

The Bureau of Agricultural Economics, the Office of Budget and Finance, the Office of Foreign Agricultural Relations, the Office of Information, the Library, the Office of Personnel, the Office of the Solicitor, the Office of Plant and Operations, and (Office of Land Use Coordination) *discontinued*

There are two direct tie-ins among officials, the Assistant Secretary of Agriculture being First Assistant War Food Administrator and the Agricultural Research Administrator being Associate Food Production Administrator. There are all sorts of indirect tie-ins because the Agricultural Research Administration, the Forest Service, the Rural Electrification Administration, and the Farm Credit Administration are constantly called upon to render service to the War Food Administration.

The immediate staff of the War Food Administration has remained small. The War Services Branch of the Food Production Administration was transferred to the Office of the War Food Administrator on May 27, 1943. An Office of Labor was established June 23, 1943, which took over entire responsibility for carrying out all farm labor, wage-stabilization, and manpower programs. An Office of Materials and Facilities was set up to direct supply activities in this field, on May 10; an Office of Transportation to coordinate the transportation of work of the various agencies in WFA, on May 17; and an Office of War Board Services, a liaison office for the boards, on August 25, 1943. This is all to date. The final organization of the War Food Administration to date was announced September 24, 1943, by Administrator's Memorandum No. 27.

The National War Board was created September 1 with the following as members: Chairman, the Director of the Office of War Board Services; Chief of the Agricultural Adjustment Agency, Chief of the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, President of the Commodity Credit Corporation, Director of Extension Work, Governor of the Farm Credit Administration, Director of Food Distribution, Chief of the Forest Service, Director of Information, Administrator of the Rural Electrification Administration, Chief of the Soil Conservation Service, and the Solicitor.

Executive Order 9385, of October 6, 1943, transferred the functions of the War Food Administration and the Commodity Credit Corporation with respect to the procurement and development of food, food machinery, and other food facilities in foreign countries, to the Foreign Economic Administration.

On October 23 the Administrative Council was reconstituted with the following members: Assistant to the Secretary, Assistant to the War Food Administrator, the Director of Finance and Budget Officer, Director of Personnel, Director of Information, the Solicitor, Chief of the Office of Plant and Operations, and the Land Use Coordinator.

Executive Order 9334 was amended under date of October 29 and the Combined Food Board was reconstituted with the War Food Administrator as United States representative, a Canadian in addition to the British member, and the Secretary of Agriculture as neutral chairman. At the same time both the Food Advisory Committee and the Inter-agency Allocations Committee were abolished. Their functions were combined and transferred to a newly created Food Requirements and Allocations Committee of the War Food Administration.

The Chairman of this Committee, and personal representative and Deputy of the War Food Administrator both thereon and on the Combined Food Board, is the Director of Food Distribution. The other members of the committee are representatives of the War Department, the Navy Department, the Office of Foreign Economic Administration, the War Shipping Administration, the Civilian Food Branch of the Food Distribution Administration, and the Food Production Administration. Administrator's Memorandum No. 30 of October 28, 1943, validated these changes.

The Department of Agriculture and the War Food Administration are closely integrated not only by the fact that the Assistant Secretary of Agriculture is also First Assistant War Food Administrator, but by the authority the Secretary and the Administrator have to exercise any and all powers vested in the other, by statute or otherwise, to the extent that is necessary to enable them to perform their respective duties and functions. Exercise of any such power by either of them is legally authorized and not subject to challenge by any third party affected thereby. Mutual services by the staff offices and the constitution and functions of the National War Board act as further tie-ins and lines of coordination.